



# DIGITAL ACCESS TO SCHOLARSHIP AT HARVARD

## The Changing "Harvard Student": Ethnicity, Race, and Gender

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Citation	Synnott, Marcia G. The changing "Harvard student": ethnicity, race, and gender. In Yards and gates: gender in Harvard and Radcliffe history, edited by Laurel Ulrich, 195-214. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
Accessed	February 19, 2015 7:36:57 AM EST
Citable Link	<a href="http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:4669676">http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:4669676</a>
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*(Article begins on next page)*

## The Changing “Harvard Student”: Ethnicity, Race, and Gender

Marcia G. Synnott

Harvard’s stated admissions policies have had a notable consistency in language. What the university said in the mid-1940s was not too different from what it said in its brief in the Supreme Court in *Regents of the University of California v. Allan Bakke* or from what President Neil Rudenstine wrote on “Diversity and Learning” in *The President’s Report 1993-1995*. In various statements about its admissions policies Harvard has often emphasized “a broadly balanced and representative student body.”<sup>1</sup> For much of the twentieth century, however, its admissions practices favored native-born, white, middle- or upper-class Protestant men over Catholics, Jews, racial minorities, and women.<sup>2</sup>

Comparing the history of religious, ethnic, and racial discrimination with the history of gender discrimination at Harvard shows both parallels and differences and demonstrates the university’s ability to diversify and change in response to both national trends and institutional interests.

### ***Harvard and Radcliffe in the Age of Ethnic and Religious Quotas***

Today Harvard admits less than 11 percent of applicants and enjoys an acceptance yield of almost 80 percent.<sup>3</sup> By contrast, in July 1940, the Harvard Committee on Admission acknowledged to President James Bryant Conant that it had “reached the bottom of the rope” in trying to fill 1,100 seats in the freshman class. To bring in enough paying customers in a still-depressed economy, Conant authorized Richard M. Gummere,

chairman of the Committee on Admission, to admit an additional one hundred students. Reluctant “to lower unduly the standards of admission,” Conant wrote that “no one should be admitted to Harvard College who has not at least a fifty-fifty chance of being promoted to the Sophomore class.” If 75 of the last 100 students “flunked,” he “should feel that we had taken money under false pretenses.” At that time, Harvard had a well-documented 15 to 16 percent Jewish quota, achieved largely through its “selective” admissions policy.<sup>4</sup>

Although a majority of Harvard faculty was probably not anti-Semitic, there were several who, sharing the opinions of former president A. Lawrence Lowell, made their views well known. In May 1939, a few months before the outbreak of World War II in Europe, Julian Lowell Coolidge, master of Lowell House (1930-September 1940), complained to President Conant about “the vexing question of the number of Jews in Harvard College,” who continued to be too numerous for his taste. Coolidge was distressed that figures on house membership, compiled by the Dean’s Office in the spring of 1939, indicated that the houses averaged 17 percent Jewish students, instead of the 10 percent agreed on by the masters in 1932. Jewish students were more likely to survive academically than non-Jewish students and hence remained eligible for House membership. Coolidge also emphasized that “the commuters were notoriously largely Semitic.” After 164 Jewish freshmen were admitted in fall 1938, Coolidge urged the Admission Committee “to be even more vigilant in controlling Jewish admission to Harvard College.”<sup>5</sup>

Harvard may have exercised an informal Jewish quota until the 1950s, even after Jewish students had gained the social acceptance that led to having a Jew as captain of the 1947 football team and another as the first marshal of the class of 1948. Replying to a Jewish alumnus who declined to contribute to the Class of 1901 Fund, Gummere wrote that

we have no quotas of any sort,--religious, racial, or geographical. We are, in line with President Conant's policy, of course interested in a national spread from all parts of the country; and we are desirous of having a balanced freshman class each year. By 'balanced,' I mean, a fair representation of all groups, playing no favorites and with no prejudices.

Admissions decisions, Gummere insisted, were "all on an individual basis, taking into account scholarship, leadership and character."<sup>6</sup> Yet as late as 1958, Harvard had to defend its requirement that an applicant submit a photograph, despite the possibility of "a formal complaint" by the State Commission against Discrimination. Admissions officers in the College and the Law School even maintained "that the photograph works to the advantage of Negro students," but at the time Harvard made limited efforts to recruit African Americans.<sup>7</sup>

Undoubtedly aware of Harvard's quota on male Jewish students and limited by a quota on women undergraduates, Radcliffe College too may have restricted its Jewish admissions from the late 1930s into the early 1950s. Jewish students were numerous enough to form a Menorah Society by the 1920s, the Zionist Avukah by the 1930s, and

Hillel by the 1940s.<sup>8</sup> Although Radcliffe's total enrollment of Jewish students in 1936-37, at 24.8 percent, was higher than Harvard's and more than double that of Smith's 10 percent, the next highest among the Seven Sisters, it sharply declined the following year to 16.5 percent, while Smith's rose to 12.9 percent.<sup>9</sup> Though there were few letters alleging anti-Semitism at Radcliffe, in 1948 a Chicago alumnus complained to the Radcliffe Dean of Admissions about the rejection of his daughter, who was admitted to sophomore standing at Stanford University: "She was invited to one of those 'snooty' teas of local Radcliffe graduates where she was given the distinct understanding by alumni present that as a girl of the Jewish faith she might get in if there were not too many Jewish girls applying. In other words, very distinctly told that there was a non-official Jewish quota."<sup>10</sup> As Radcliffe moved from attracting a student body largely from Massachusetts to becoming a leading national college, it may have sought to recruit, as Harvard did, in euphemistic terms, "a national spread" and "a balanced freshman class."<sup>11</sup>

As academic standards rose at Harvard, the percentage of Jewish students climbed back to 21 percent, its level in 1922, before President Lowell began his campaign to limit their numbers. According to a 1961 tabulation on "Jewish Enrollment in Ivy League Colleges" compiled at Yale University, which then had 11.8 percent, Harvard's Jewish enrollment was ahead of Brown's 18 percent and Princeton's and Dartmouth's at 15 percent each. However, Harvard had fewer Jewish students than Columbia (45 percent), Cornell (26 percent), or the University of Pennsylvania (25 percent).<sup>12</sup>

Despite the fact that antidiscrimination laws prohibited Harvard from inquiring into student religious affiliation or preference, the university continued to exclude non-

Christian private religious services from Memorial Church until 1958. In the eyes of Willard L. Sperry, dean of the Divinity School and former chairman of the Board of Preachers, Memorial Church was “a Protestant institution,” even though it had been built in memory of all Harvard graduates who died in the nation’s twentieth-century wars.<sup>13</sup> When the policy of religious exclusion became public, many within the Harvard community protested verbally and in writing, prompting the Corporation on April 21, 1958, “to modify its policy governing Memorial Church to permit its use on certain occasions for private non-Christian ceremonies conducted by officials of other religions.” While maintaining the “essentially Christian character” of Memorial Church, the university pledged “to try to honor the convictions of each member of the Harvard community.”<sup>14</sup>

In contrast to Jews, Catholic students--and faculty--had generally found a degree of acceptance at Harvard since the nineteenth century, although the university was sometimes patronizing toward Catholic colleges. The attendance of Catholic students may also have been discouraged both by the prejudices of some Harvard students and by the extreme sensitivity of Catholic leaders at Boston College to the real and imagined anti-Catholicism at Protestant institutions. Numbering about 300 in 1894, Catholic students organized a St. Paul’s Catholic Club at Harvard; in 1906 women formed a Catholic Club at Radcliffe. Acceptance of Catholics at Harvard, probably not unrelated to their growing political power, was conspicuously demonstrated, moreover, when James Byrne, class of 1877, became the first Catholic (1920-1926) on the seven-member Harvard Corporation. At the 1937 commencement, Harvard conferred an honorary

degree, an LL.D., on Cardinal William Henry O'Connell, which an alumnus of the class of 1912, a former student president of the St. Paul's Catholic Club, felt "could not have happened twenty-five years before when I was a senior." In 1958 the Charles Chauncey Stillman Guest Professorship of Roman Catholic Studies was endowed in the Divinity School. Two years later, the election of John F. Kennedy, class of 1940, as the first Catholic president stifled those still harboring prejudice.<sup>15</sup>

### ***The Radcliffe Quota: A Separate and Unequal Status***

Harvard's delay in adopting full coeducation can be attributed both to its reluctance to commit substantial resources on behalf of women students and to Radcliffe's deference, despite its pioneering role in forging a coordinate relationship with a prestigious male university. Indeed, for decades Radcliffe had often been on the defensive in dealing with such Harvard presidents as Lowell, who viewed it as an encumbrance and its president, at most, no more important than a Harvard dean. Professor Le Baron Russell Briggs, who served as a part-time president of Radcliffe from 1903 to 1923, recognized that the possibility of Radcliffe's becoming a college within the university was dependent on a larger endowment and the mellowing of attitudes over time.<sup>16</sup> When Ada Louise Comstock left the deanship of Smith College to become Radcliffe's first full-time president (1923-43), the Radcliffe trustees had to agree to limit undergraduate enrollment to 750 and graduate students to 250. The April 16, 1943, Harvard-Radcliffe Agreement significantly changed the relationship between the two institutions by allowing Radcliffe students above the freshman year to enter university lecture halls and Harvard students to

follow their professors to Radcliffe classrooms.<sup>17</sup> Provost and history professor Paul H. Buck, who largely engineered the measure because of World War II's demands on Harvard faculty, persuaded them "to adopt" an "ingenious device," in Conant's words. In exchange for most of Radcliffe's tuition receipts, Harvard agreed to provide all instruction to undergraduate women; and to forestall complaints by faculty who lost the extra compensation for teaching at Radcliffe while gaining a heavier student load, Harvard raised its own salaries by about 20 percent. Once an opponent of coeducational classes, Conant "became slowly convinced that administrative awkwardness was too high a price to pay for the continuation of the prejudices of those who, like myself, wished Harvard to remain strictly a man's college." The formalization of "joint instruction" occurred in 1947; freshman classes merged three years later.<sup>18</sup>

Coeducational classes with Harvard enhanced Radcliffe's desirability as a college for women. Administering its own admissions policies until 1975, Radcliffe was even more selective than Harvard, because of the limited number of places for undergraduate women, determined by the 4:1 male-female ratio that existed until President Derek Bok raised it in 1972 to 2.5:1 (from 300 to 450 women). For example, Radcliffe admitted only about 18 percent of applicants between 1964 and 1974; Harvard's acceptance rate gradually declined, between 1956 and 1973, from 43 to 19 percent. During the same period, the active recruitment of students from a wider geographic area gradually transformed Radcliffe from a heavily commuter college into a more expensive residential one.<sup>19</sup> Opening an academic and residential Graduate Center in 1956, Radcliffe added two dormitories, Holmes Hall (1952) and Comstock Hall (1958) to Moors Hall (1949). In



1961 cooperative houses, named for President Wilbur Kitchener Jordan, opened. With housing available for most students, only about 100 students commuted. By 1958-1959, total undergraduate enrollment reached 5,587--1,105 at Radcliffe and 4,482 at Harvard; Radcliffe graduate students numbered 513 of the total graduate enrollment of 6,669. Growing cooperation with Harvard resulted in Radcliffe's contributing \$250,000 to each of two construction projects of the Program for Harvard College: the Loeb Drama Center and the new University Health Center.<sup>20</sup>

Nevertheless, both institutions viewed a closer relationship with some suspicion. Nathan Marsh Pusey, A.B. 1928, the first Harvard president (1952-1971) to have a daughter since Radcliffe's founding in 1879, indicated on several occasions that Radcliffe was of secondary importance to his obligations to Harvard and its alumni. For example, he declined the invitation to attend the November 3, 1956 dedication of the new Graduate Center at Radcliffe, which was then third, behind Columbia and Chicago, in conferring Ph.D.'s on women. In his place, Pusey sent dean McGeorge Bundy. Since the date and time--3:00 p.m.--were circled on the letter of invitation with a notation, "Sat - U of Penna. Game!" it may be assumed that Pusey instead attended the football game across the river (which Harvard lost to Penn, 14 to 28). Joining Dean Bernice Cronkhite at the dedication of the center which would later be named in her honor was astronomer Cecilia Payne-Gaposchkin, Ph.D. 1925, whom Harvard appointed a tenured full professor in 1956, the first woman to rise through faculty ranks.<sup>21</sup>

Within Harvard University, women, like Jews, were a noticeable minority and did not enjoy full religious and social inclusion in an educational institution still perceived as

predominantly for white Christian men. In the 1950s, Radcliffe students charged Harvard “with being anti-feminist, unchristian and behind the times in denying them admission” to morning prayers in Memorial Church’s Appleton Chapel. In response, Dean Sperry of the Divinity School cited “the opinion of members of the Board and senior Faculty who come to Prayers [that] the presence of these girls would subtly alter the nature of the service.” Into the “very masculine” service, then usually attended by only 50 male students and faculty, “the girls would tend to introduce a Christian Endeavor or Epworth League tone to the occasion and it would undoubtedly be used for social purposes.” In the front pews of the church, however, a group of women formed “a kind of ‘court of the women,’” where they could “overhear the service through the screen.” Women could also enter an outside door to a lounge and rest room in the church basement. Vigorously insisting that Harvard was not “now fully coeducational,” Sperry thought any decision to admit women to morning prayers should be made by a special vote of the Harvard Corporation.<sup>22</sup>

Not to be deterred from participating in morning prayers was Helen Maud Cam, Girton College, Litt.D., Cambridge University 1936, who taught English constitutional history from 1948 to 1954 as a tenured professor and first holder of the Samuel Zemurray Jr. and Doris Zemurray Stone-Radcliffe Professorship. She had, “qua professor at Harvard, . . . always exercised her right to pass within the grill,” noted Mason Hammond, Pope Professor of the Latin Language and Literature and master of Kirkland House (1945-1955). “The present system smacks of the existence of *matroneia* in early Christian churches; screened galleries for the ladies,” Hammond wrote President Pusey. “If we

have joint education in the classrooms, how much more should there be joint worship in the House of God, which should know neither slave nor free, male nor female.” On September 26, 1955, the Reverend George Buttrick agreed that ““none should be barred from services in a Christian church because of sex, rank or race.”” And three years later, almost all approved the harmonious music when women joined the choir of Memorial Church for the first time.<sup>23</sup>

### ***Overcoming the Color Line at Harvard and Radcliffe***

Race and gender, once rather separate categories, became linked by the late 1960s and 1970s with the growing debate on student diversity. Neither Harvard nor Radcliffe made racial diversity a priority admissions goal in the aftermath of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954). Instead, both colleges sought to recruit more of the under-represented groups--white ethnic and religious minorities like Catholics and Jews; public, rather than private school graduates; and those from “disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds.” When Frank S. Jones entered in 1950, he was just one of four African American freshmen in “the largest [class] in the history of the College,” numbering 1,645, including 896 veterans. The first black manager of the almost all-white football team, Jones was also selected second class marshal. Then averaging less than a dozen per class, African Americans were usually assigned to other blacks as roommates. Meanwhile, Harvard had appointed to the Faculty of Arts and Sciences its first African American, Ralph Bunche, who later served as the first black Overseer (1959-1965).<sup>24</sup>

Radcliffe students also welcomed the few African American women who enrolled. For example, the senior class of 1948 chose Elizabeth Fitzgerald Howard as president and class marshal. Because the Admissions Office evidently did very little to identify the private and public secondary schools that academically prepared them, most black students came to Radcliffe because of family connections, the influence of a particular teacher, or residential proximity to the college.<sup>25</sup> Despite the absence of a recruitment policy, Radcliffe was, according to Linda Perkins, “by far the leader in the number of Black women graduates among the Seven Sisters colleges.” Between Alberta Scott, A.B. 1898, and the 1950 commencement, Radcliffe graduated 92 African Americans, 56 undergraduates and 36 graduate students.<sup>26</sup> Yet there were probably not more than two, possibly three, blacks in any of the ten classes from 1955 through 1964.<sup>27</sup>

Harvard’s commitment to recruiting racial minorities and more international students, many from Africa and the West Indies, came with Fred Glimp’s tenure as dean of Admissions and Financial Aid (1960-1967). By 1964, about 25 blacks entered each Harvard freshman class.<sup>28</sup> Progress did not come fast enough for Harvard and Radcliffe students energized by the civil rights movement.<sup>29</sup>

Radcliffe students were among those questioning college admissions policies and supporting demands by Harvard’s African American students, on April 10, 1968, for the proportional recruitment of black students and the establishment of an Afro-American Studies Program. On November 26, 1968, the Radcliffe Ad Hoc Committee of Black Students met with the Radcliffe Policy Committee on Admissions and Financial Aid to insist on “much more active recruiting” of black students. The college affirmed its

commitment “to seek more black and ‘disadvantaged’ students,” including “some rethinking of past criteria for admission.” On December 10 a small group of black women students sat-in at Fay House to emphasize the seriousness of their demands. Meeting that afternoon with the black students, Radcliffe president Mary Ingraham Bunting agreed with “a minimum target of 30 black students for the Class of 1973,” but would not establish a quota. New Radcliffe recruitment initiatives involved visiting city schools in Boston, Philadelphia, and Brooklyn and sending letters to all National Achievement Scholarship Program semi-finalists and to historically black southern high schools. Radcliffe also sought to hire a black admissions officer the next year, following Harvard’s 1968 hiring of its first black financial aid and admissions officer. Such recruitment efforts became essential to ensure Radcliffe’s leadership in attracting the best women after Princeton and Yale went coeducational.<sup>30</sup>

On April 9, 1969, Harvard and Radcliffe students, led by the campus chapter of Students for a Democratic Society, took over University Hall; among their demands were the abolition of the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) on campus and student participation in recruiting faculty for Afro-American Studies. To settle the two-week strike that resulted when President Pusey ordered in the police, the Harvard faculty agreed, on April 22, to establish an Afro-American Studies Program and to terminate ROTC. Under admissions director Chase Peterson 1952 (1967-1972), Harvard recruited over 100 blacks for the class of 1973. Between the classes of 1972 and 1975, the percentage of black students at Harvard doubled, from 4.24 to 8.68 percent.<sup>31</sup>

During the same period, the views of women students dramatically changed, leading to demands for the admission of more women, the hiring of more women faculty, and a closer relationship between Radcliffe and Harvard.

***To Merge or Not to Merge Radcliffe College with Harvard: The 1950s to 2000***

Because each college was independently managed by its own officers and trustees, an assistant to President Pusey reassured a member of the Corporation in May 1959, it was “absolutely untrue to say that the education of women at Radcliffe involves the misappropriation of Harvard funds.” Moreover, women had proven their merit academically and also discredited “the Radcliffe myth” of “unattractive and unmarriedable” students, “since more than sixty per cent of the Radcliffe girls who marry choose Harvard men as their husbands.”<sup>32</sup>

The image of Radcliffe College in the late 1950s suggested that it had achieved the best of both worlds as a coordinate college with Harvard. It seemed to be maintaining a unique identity as a separate college for women, while providing entrée for its students into Harvard classrooms and most libraries. Radcliffe began to undermine its own identity, however, beginning in November 1957, when it formed more than half a dozen joint extracurricular activities with Harvard. The result of the *Harvard Crimson*’s inclusion of women staff members was the deterioration, if not the demise, of such publications as the weekly *Radcliffe News*. In addition, both the *Radcliffe Freshman Register* and the *Radcliffe Yearbook* were taken over by Harvard Yearbook Publications, which included women staff members. By 1960 only the Athletic Association and the

Christian Fellowship survived among Radcliffe's original group of independent extracurricular activities. By 1968-1969, only the Choral Society remained as a Radcliffe organization.<sup>33</sup>

In an essay entitled "Decline and Fall?" the *1960 Radcliffe Yearbook* recognized the cost of collaboration: "Old activities are either dying out, merging or fighting for existence while, paradoxically, new groups are formed in their stead." The college, "undeniably, at a turning point," had two choices: either "become an actual part of Harvard University," with "the absorption of its characteristics" being "inevitable if it is to conform to a university idea"; or developing "its 'identity'" within Radcliffe.<sup>34</sup>

President Bunting, who became Radcliffe's fifth president--and its first woman president with a Ph.D.--in February 1960, began to revive Radcliffe as a collegiate experience for women while pursuing even closer cooperation with Harvard. Nationally recognized for her research in microbial genetics, she also brought to her presidency experiences as dean of Douglass College (1955-1960), Rutgers University, and as a widowed mother of four children.<sup>35</sup> "Harvard Faculty meetings *are* different--more absurd and more wonderful than I ever anticipated," President Bunting said after receiving an honorary master's degree, making her a member of the Harvard alumni. She cultivated a cordial relationship with President Pusey, although, as in the past, he continued to send Harvard professors to represent him at Radcliffe commencements.<sup>36</sup>

President Bunting launched a personal "campaign against apathy" among Radcliffe students. In "The Decline and Fall of Radcliffe Apathy," the *1961 Radcliffe Yearbook* described her initiatives. To exchange information on undergraduate views and

opinions, she formed the President's Advisory Board of five undergraduates and all the deans. Bunting's President's Fund provided financial support for new activities in each dormitory. Believing "that one must gain invaluable experience in college in order to organize one's life in a healthy integration of family and community," she promoted activities in the residential Radcliffe Quadrangle: thesis readings followed by discussions led by Harvard professors; "Living Room Talks" on students' future roles as wives and mothers; and weekly seminars with Harvard faculty. Though "one cannot say Radcliffe has gone from apathy to booming activity," the yearbook concluded, "The Radcliffe spirit, long swamped in Harvard activity, has again begun to be heard." An incentive to extracurricular participation in college was the Admissions Office's decision to consider, in addition to grades, an applicant's high school activities. Another sign of involvement was the 1961 Student Government Association's debate over more frequent "open-open house" parietal hours (allowing male guests upstairs); each dorm then decided for itself. Parietal rules continued until the 1970s and the inauguration of coresidency.<sup>37</sup>

In 1961 Bunting established the Radcliffe Institute for Independent Study and introduced the Radcliffe house system. The three units--South House, North House, and East House--were later combined into two houses. Currier House (1970), the first to be constructed on the House plan, consisted of four halls--Bingham, Daniels, Gilbert, and Tuchman. Expanding and improving Radcliffe's physical plant was essential to a future merger with Harvard, much as a bride's dowry was to a marriage.<sup>38</sup>

In the 327th year of Harvard College and the 84th year of Radcliffe College, the first Radcliffe seniors received degrees, in English, from Harvard University; the class of



1963 would subsequently publish the first coeducational twenty-fifth anniversary report. Not until 1970, however, did Radcliffe seniors gain the right to join the commencement procession in Tercentenary Theatre. After the ceremony, women and men seniors received individual diplomas in, respectively, the Radcliffe Quadrangle and the ten Harvard Houses. In 1963 the Harvard Business School opened all programs to women, and the Harvard Corporation and the Radcliffe Council of its Board of Trustees agreed to merge their respective graduate schools. In 1966 Hilles Library opened to both women and men at the Radcliffe Quadrangle; Lamont Library (opened in 1949) finally opened to women in 1967.<sup>39</sup>

Despite Bunting and Pusey's mutual commitment to the development of a closer relationship between Radcliffe and Harvard, they had first to overcome alumnae/i opposition and to weather the student protests and strikes from 1968 to 1970.<sup>40</sup> Some alumnae, encouraged over the decades to give money to Radcliffe because of its uniqueness, raised the question of why a merger with Harvard was needed. But the step promised greater educational gains and avoided continuing financial shortfalls. In spring 1970 "an experimental change in residence" began when 150 men from Adams, Winthrop, and Lowell Houses exchanged with 150 women from Smith, North, and East Houses. Further coresidency depended on the joint administration implemented by Radcliffe and Harvard's 1971 "nonmerger merger." Harvard became financially responsible for most of Radcliffe's daily operations in exchange for all of Radcliffe's undergraduate tuition fees and endowment income and gifts for current projects. Radcliffe still controlled its endowment, capital, and buildings and was responsible for

administering and supporting the Radcliffe Institute, the Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America (founded in 1943, it moved in 1965 to the former Radcliffe College Library), the Alumnae Association, and the Office of Alumnae Career Services. In 1971, after the Harvard Corporation voted Harvard degrees retroactively to all Radcliffe degree holders, alumnae from earlier classes became members of the Harvard Alumni Association. Indeed, the progress of women from the 1943 Harvard-Radcliffe Agreement to 1971's "nonmerger merger" might best be described as "Coeducation 'by degrees'."<sup>41</sup>

After reviewing the 1971 Harvard-Radcliffe "nonmerger merger," a joint committee of faculty, administrators, alumni/ae, and members of the Governing Boards appointed by Radcliffe's sixth president, Matina Horner (1972-89), and Harvard's twenty-fifth president, Derek Bok, concluded unequivocally in 1975 that

any kind of quota, and in particular quotas based on race, religion or sex, are inconsistent with the role of an institution serving the public in a free society. Once it has accepted the task of educating both men and women, a university, dedicated as it is to intellectual freedom and dispassionate analysis, must provide equality of opportunity in admissions and intellectual development for both sexes.

Because "a sex quota" was no more "acceptable" than "other quotas," the committee recommended "a policy of equal access" for women undergraduates, a principle already endorsed by both Princeton and Yale, which began admitting women undergraduates in

1969. A new Harvard-Radcliffe Office of Admissions and Financial Aid would seek to recruit the best men and women applicants and bring their numbers toward parity.<sup>42</sup>

Within two years after a revised ratio of 2.5 men to 1 woman went into effect for the class of 1976, Radcliffe substantially diversified its applicant pool. To the class of 1978, it admitted 60 (9.3 percent) African American women and 18 (2.8 percent) Spanish-speaking women, which exceeded Harvard's admission percentages of the same groups: 97 (6.7 percent) African American and 37 (2.6 percent) Spanish-speaking men. Thus, the 567 women (a 1.8:1 ratio) admitted to the class of 1980 by the joint Office of Admissions and Financial Aid, the first year of equal access, promised to increase ethnic and racial diversity. Indeed, "equal access" for women combined with the aggressive recruitment served the overall goal of expanding diversity within Harvard.<sup>43</sup>

The next major step affecting undergraduate women occurred on May 11, 1977, when presidents Horner and Bok signed an agreement reaffirming Radcliffe's separate corporate status and defining their individual and mutual educational responsibilities. Radcliffe delegated to Harvard not only responsibility for undergraduate instruction, but also management of the House system, with the Radcliffe president retaining a right of consultation. In 1977-1978 Radcliffe paid to Harvard all tuition money and almost one million dollars in endowment income and unrestricted financial aid funds. This agreement fell far short, however, of the complete "marriage" that Bunting, and probably first president Elizabeth Cary Agassiz, had hoped for by Radcliffe's hundredth anniversary.<sup>44</sup>

The long-anticipated marriage was finally consummated on October 1, 1999, under the Harvard-Radcliffe Merger Agreement signed by President Neil Rudenstine and Nancy-Beth Gordon Sheerr, chair of the Radcliffe Board of Trustees. The corporate demise of Radcliffe College and the merging of its assets with Harvard's had momentous consequences for alumnae and women undergraduates. In place of the college, a nationally important Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study was to emerge, sustained by \$300 million jointly contributed by both institutions; the remaining \$50 million of Radcliffe's endowment would go toward undergraduate financial aid. The Institute's goals included supporting academic research and artistic endeavors and maintaining "Radcliffe's commitment to women, gender and society." On January 1, 2001, Drew Gilpin Faust, former University of Pennsylvania Annenberg Professor of History, took office as the new dean of the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study with tenure as a full professor of history in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.<sup>45</sup>

Dropping "Radcliffe" from the title of the Harvard College Office of Admissions meant that beginning with the Class of 2004 only Harvard is directly involved in undergraduate education. As women undergraduates approach 50 percent of incoming classes, it will be a challenge for the dean of Harvard College--and the new university president, Lawrence H. Summers--to ensure that they experience the same opportunities as those enjoyed by men.<sup>46</sup> Throughout Radcliffe's history, many championed its separate identity, just as others applauded every step leading toward complete merger with Harvard. The ultimate success of total merger awaits judgments from another generation, which might well consider Paul Buck's observations on Harvard's history:

At any fixed point of time something is being born while something is dying and something else is reaching full maturity. . . . Each generation has its own assignment to work out in terms of the forces, pressures, trends, factors, circumstances, resources, liabilities, legacies from the past, and horizons for the future . . . and the only judgment history can properly make is to measure the achievement in terms of the accompanying circumstances.<sup>47</sup>

Notes

1 . U.S. Supreme Court Justice Lewis F. Powell, Jr., citing the Harvard College Admissions Program, 352-55, *Brief of Columbia University, Harvard University, Stanford University and the University of Pennsylvania as Amici Curiae*, June 7, 1977, (in the Supreme Court of the United States, October Term, 1976, no. 76-811, *Regents of the University of California, Petitioner, v. Allan Bakke, Respondent*). President Neil Rudenstine, “Diversity and Learning,” *The President’s Report 1993-1995* (1996): “the ‘measure of a class’ consists largely in ‘how much its members are likely to learn from each other--the real beginning of learning, both intellectually and emotionally.’ The range of undergraduate `interests, talents, backgrounds and career goals affects importantly the educational experience of our students,’ because ‘a diverse student body is an educational resource of coordinate importance with our faculty and our library, laboratory and housing arrangements. (32-33, quoted from Harvard Admission Committee Reports 1963-64, p. 92, and 1964-1965, pp. 100-1).

2. James M. Landis to A. Calvert Smith, March 13, 1945, enclosing “a redraft” on Harvard admissions, Papers of President James Bryant Conant [hereafter, JBC Papers], file “As-Alk,” Harvard University Archives [hereafter, HUA]. See a defense of affirmative action by former Harvard and Princeton presidents Derek Bok and William G. Bowen, *The Shape of the River: Long-Term Consequences of Considering Race in College and University Admissions* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998).

3. "It's another record breaker: class of 2005 chosen from a record pool of 19,009," April 5, 2001; and "FAS admissions yield is close to 80 percent," May 17, 2001, *Harvard University Gazette Online* at [www.news.harvard.edu/gazette/2001](http://www.news.harvard.edu/gazette/2001). Since early action cases totaled 53.4 percent of those admitted, the acceptance rate for regular decision was 10.6 percent (Nicole B. Usher, "Acceptance Rate For Class of 2005 Hits All-Time Low," April 4, 2001, *Harvard Crimson Online* at [www.thecrimson.com/news/article.asp?ref=11685](http://www.thecrimson.com/news/article.asp?ref=11685)).
4. Richard M. Gummere to James B. Conant, July 22, 1940, and Conant to Gummere, July 1, 1940, JBC Papers, file "Admission, Committee on."
5. Julian L. Coolidge to James B. Conant, May 9, 1939, JBC Papers, folder "Lowell House 1938-39."
6. Richard M. Gummere to Marcus I. Goldman, Feb. 5, 1948, JBC Papers, file "Aa-Alk."
7. McGeorge Bundy to President Nathan M. Pusey, May 29, 1958, Papers of President Nathan Marsh Pusey [hereafter, NMP Papers], file "Admissions & Financial Aids," HUA.
8. Dorothy Elia Howells, *A Century to Celebrate: Radcliffe College, 1879-1979* (Cambridge, Mass.: Radcliffe College, 1978), 89. Harvard Jewish students had organized a Menorah Society in 1906.
9. Barbara Miller Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1985), 143-45, Table 7A, Percentages of Jewish Students Enrolled at Five Eastern Women's Colleges, 1936-38, and Table 7B Radcliffe Freshman Admissions, 1934-37, based on a chart in file, "Admissions, the Jewish Problem," Nov. 1, 1937, in the Ada L. Comstock Papers, Radcliffe College Archives.



10. Maxwell Abbell to Dean of Admissions, Radcliffe College, Jan. 23, 1948, enclosing copy of a similar letter to David McCord, executive secretary of the Harvard Fund, JBC Papers, file "Radcliffe 1947-1948."
11. Richard M. Gummere to Marcus I. Goldman, Feb. 5, 1948.
12. Marcia Graham Synnott, *The Half-Opened Door: Discrimination and Admissions at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, 1900-1970* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1979), chap. 3, "Harvard: Debate on Restriction, 1922." Rabbi Richard J. Israel, director of B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation at Yale University, "Jewish Enrollment in Ivy League Colleges," Nov. 27, 1961, sent by Sidney Lovett to President A. Whitney Griswold, Dec. 11, 1961, YRG 2-A-16 A, Whitney Griswold Papers, box 6, folder 41, Yale University Archives, New Haven, Conn.
13. W. L. Sperry, Memorandum for The Chairman of the Board of Preachers, NMP Papers, file "Memorial Church 1953-1954."
14. Jerome D. Greene to Nathan M. Pusey, April 15, 1958; and Jerome D. Greene, letter, "Right of Rite," to the *Harvard Crimson*, April 12, 1958; news release, Wednesday, April 23, 1958; and News About Harvard [press clippings], April 19-May 2, 1958, NMP Papers, file "Memorial Church, 1957-1958." Among the Harvard seniors signing a letter of protest to President Pusey were the first marshal of the class, the Student Council president, the *Crimson* president, the varsity track captain, the presidents of Signet and Spee clubs, Phi Beta Kappa members, both Henry Fellows, the Paine Traveling Fellow, a class agent, and the conductor of the Bach Society Orchestra: Adam Clymer, et al., to Nathan M. Pusey, April 14, 1958, NMP Papers, file "Memorial Church 1957-1958."

15. Hugh Hawkins, *Between Harvard and America: The Educational Leadership of Charles W. Eliot* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 184-90; Howells, *A Century to Celebrate*, 89; George H. McCaffrey to James B. Conant, Aug. 11, 1937, JBC Papers, file "59 McA McD"; News About Harvard, April 2-19, 1958 [press clippings], NMP Papers, file "Memorial Church, 1957-1958." Charles Joseph Bonaparte, class of 1871, was Harvard's first Roman Catholic Overseer (1891). The same year, Harvard awarded an LL.D. to Bishop John Joseph Keane, first rector of Catholic University.
16. Howells, *A Century to Celebrate*, 20-22, 44, 37.
17. Ibid., 20-26
18. James B. Conant, *My Several Lives: Memoirs of a Social Inventor* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), chap. 28 "Coeducation in Fact If Not in Theory," 374, 377-80, 374-83; Howells, *A Century to Celebrate*, 26-29, 54.
19. Howells, *A Century to Celebrate*, 27, 29, 37. Harvard University, *Report of the Committee to Consider Aspects of the Harvard-Radcliffe Relationship that Affect Administrative Arrangements, Admissions, Financial Aid and Educational Policy* (Cambridge, Mass.: [Harvard University], Feb. 26, 1975), 5 (HUA).
20. "Working List of Capital Needs," Sept. 1956, file "Radcliffe 1956-1957"; William Bentinck-Smith to Thomas S. Lamont, May 13, 1959, both in NMP Papers, file "Radcliffe 1958-59"; Howells, *A Century to Celebrate*, 27, 33, 86-88, 92.
21. Howells, *A Century to Celebrate*, 55, 62; W. K. Jordan to Nathan M. Pusey, Sept. [12], 1956, and Pusey to Jordan, Sept. 13, 1956, NMP Papers, file "Radcliffe 1956-57."
22. Sperry, Memorandum for The Chairman of the Board of Preachers, 1954.

23. Mason Hammond to Nathan M. Pusey, Feb. 22, 1954, NMP Papers, file "Memorial Church 1953-1954"; Harvard University News release to the Sunday Papers of Oct. 2, 1955, NMP Papers, file "Memorial Church 1955-1956."
24. Frank S. Jones, "A Half-Century of Change: Race, Admissions, and the Harvard Community," in *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow: The Harvard Class of 1950 Reflects on the Past and Looks to the Future*, ed. George S. Mumford (Privately Published by the Harvard Class of 1950 at the Time of Their Fiftieth Reunion, Travers Press, 2000), 135, 126-48. One of the other three black freshmen was Oscar DePriest III, who graduated *summa cum laude* and earned an M.D. from Harvard. Four African Americans were veterans. A son of David D. Jones, president of Bennett College in Greensboro, North Carolina, Frank Jones had attended Phillips Academy, Andover, for three years and then followed his brother David to Harvard. Frank Jones retired from MIT as Ford Professor of Urban Affairs. Ralph Bunche, a 1927 *summa cum laude* graduate of UCLA and a basketball player, earned a Harvard A.M. (1928), Ph.D. (1934), and LL.D. (1949). He was the first black to win the Nobel Peace Prize (1950). In 1952 he resigned his Harvard professorship in government without having taught.
25. "Elizabeth Fitzgerald Howard, 'Miss Radcliffe'," *Newsweek* (1948) and 'Three Generations of a Black Radcliffe and Harvard Family,' *Radcliffe Quarterly* (1984)," in *Blacks at Harvard: A Documentary History of the African-American Experience at Harvard and Radcliffe*, ed. Werner Sollors, Caldwell Titcomb, and Thomas Underwood (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 301-9.

26. Linda Perkins, "The African American Female Elite: The Early History of African American Women in the Seven Sister Colleges, 1880-1960," *Harvard Educational Review* (Symposium: The History of Women in Education) 67, no. 4 (Winter 1997): 729; 726-29. Black women found it difficult to receive scholarships and were denied dormitory accommodations until the mid-1920s.
27. See the *Freshman Register*, *Radcliffe College Yearbook*, and *Harvard and Radcliffe Yearbook* for the appropriate years, from the class of 1955 to the class of 1969, Radcliffe Archives; Howells, *A Century to Celebrate*, 89.
28. Jones, "A Half-Century of Change," 141, 142, 135-42. From the admission of Richard Theodore Greener (A.B. 1870) in 1865 through the class of 1986, some 2,600 black men and women had enrolled as Harvard and Radcliffe undergraduates; see Caldwell Titcomb '47, A.M. '49, Ph.D. '52, "A Note on the Black Presence at Harvard," Harvard University's 350th Celebration (1986), Harvard University News Office.
29. "The Color of Protest," *The Radcliffe Yearbook 1964* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Yearbook Publications Inc., 1964), 167; 166-73.

30. The April 10, 1968, assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., sparked African American students to publish “Four Demands to ‘Fair Harvard’” in the *Crimson*: establishment of an endowed chair for a black professor; scheduling of “‘courses relevant to Blacks at Harvard’”; the hiring of more black faculty in the ladder ranks; and the admission of black students in proportion to their percentage in the national population (Jones, “A Half-Century of Change,” 144). Agreement resulting from the meeting on Nov. 26, 1968, between the Radcliffe Ad Hoc Committee of Black Students and the Radcliffe Policy Committee on Admissions and Financial Aid, Dec. 5, 1968; Mary I. Bunting, statement on the recruitment of black students, Dec. 10, 1968; and WB-S [William Bentinck-Smith] to NMP, Radcliffe Sit-In, Dec. 11, 1968, all in NMP Papers, file “Radcliffe 1968-69.”

31. Jones, “A Half-Century of Change,” 142-48. Harvard established the W. E. B. Du Bois Institute in 1975, and Radcliffe launched its Black Women Oral History project in 1976. See Richard M. Freeland, *Academia’s Golden Age: Universities in Massachusetts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 173-76.

32. William Bentinck-Smith to Thomas S. Lamont, May 13, 1959, NMP Papers, file “Radcliffe 1958-59”; Howells, *A Century to Celebrate*, 27, 54.

33. *1960 Radcliffe Yearbook* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Yearbook Publications, 1960), 40-41; Howells, *A Century to Celebrate*, 27, 29, 71-92. In 1977 Gay Seidman ‘78 became the first woman president of the *Harvard Crimson*.

34. *1960 Radcliffe Yearbook*, “Activities,” “Decline and Fall?” 41; 40-41. News Release, Nov. 21, 1957, NMP Papers, file “Radcliffe 1957-1958.” Some new groups were the Radcliffe Debate Council; the Radcliffe Shield, an honorary group formed by deans to serve as guides; the Radcliffe Forum; and the Radcliffe Union of Students; see Howells, *A Century to Celebrate*, 87, 89.

35. Radcliffe College News Release, June 1959, NMP Papers, file “Radcliffe 1959-1960.” A Phi Beta Kappa physics major at Vassar College (1931), Bunting completed her master’s and doctoral degrees at the University of Wisconsin (1934).

36. [Mary I. Bunting], handwritten note to Nathan M. Pusey, March 1, 1960, NMP Papers, file “Radcliffe 1959-1960.”

37. *1961 Radcliffe Yearbook* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Yearbook Publications, 1961), “Activities,” “The Decline and Fall of Radcliffe Apathy,” 43, 44, 45; 42-46, 49, 50-51; Howells, *A Century to Celebrate*, 89, 92, 115.

38. Howells, *A Century to Celebrate*, 29, 32-34, 54, 83, 133.

39. Ibid., 32-33, 54; Proposed Release: Morning Papers of Monday, Jan. 5, 1970, NMP Papers, file “Radcliffe 1969-1970.” Prior to 1970, it did “not seem to the Corporation that it would be appropriate to have alumnae who have just received their degrees from the University marching in the Commencement procession with those about to receive their degrees.” Instead, Pusey suggested that Radcliffe seniors ask to join the afternoon alumni procession in Harvard Yard. See Nathan M. Pusey to Roberta C. Mowry, March 30, 1966, NMP Papers, File “Radcliffe 1965-66.”

40. In 1966 Harvard and Radcliffe students protested a campus visit by Defense Secretary Robert McNamara; in 1967, they protested a recruiter from Dow Chemical Corporation (Freeland, *Academia's Golden Age*, 173-76). On Dec. 12, 1968, Radcliffe women also sat-in at Paine Hall in protest against the Vietnam War and the campus ROTC. The probation given to seventeen Radcliffe students led to an April 28, 1969, "invasion of President Bunting's office" (Howells, *A Century to Celebrate*, 115-17). See also Morton and Phyllis Keller, *Making Harvard Modern: The Rise of America's University* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), chap. 13, "The College," and chap. 14, "Crisis and Recovery," 290-338.

41. Proposed Release: Morning Papers of Monday, Jan. 5, 1970. See drafts and re-drafts of reports of the Committee on Harvard-Radcliffe Relationships in NMP Papers, file "Radcliffe 1970-1971" and file "Radcliffe Merger 1970-71." Mrs. Carl J. Gilbert to Hugh Calkins, Aug. 14, 1970; Revised Report of Committee on Harvard-Radcliffe Relationships, Jan. 25, 1971; News Release, March 8, 1971; and 1971 Amendment to Agreement Between President and Fellows of Harvard College and Trustees of Radcliffe College, June 2, 1971, NMP Papers, file "Radcliffe Merger 1970-71"; Howells, *A Century to Celebrate*, 33-34, 30, 82, 115, 123, 125, 133. Helen Homans Gilbert '36, chaired the Radcliffe Board of Trustees (1955-1972) and was acting president of Radcliffe (1964-65). The first woman Overseer from 1970 to 1976, she also chaired its board.

42. *Report of the Committee to Consider Aspects of the Harvard-Radcliffe Relationship that Affect Administrative Arrangements, Admissions, Financial Aid and Educational Policy*, 8, 9, 10, 19. See also “Equal Access Admissions,” in *Harvard Almanac 1975: A Report to Alumni and Friends of Harvard and Radcliffe* 1, no. 1 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, Dec. 1975), 11, 13-14.

43. *Report of the Committee to Consider Aspects of the Harvard-Radcliffe Relationship that Affect Administrative Arrangements, Admissions, Financial Aid and Educational Policy*, Appendix 2, Harvard Admissions, pp. A2-1-A2-4; Appendix 3, Radcliffe Admissions, pp. A3-1-A3-7; Ethnic Diversity, pp. A4-5-A4-6; Economic Diversity, p. A4-6. Radcliffe’s pool of applicants had 203 (6.8 percent) African American and 62 (1.8 percent) Spanish-speaking women. Harvard’s pool included 293 (3.8 percent) African American and 159 (2.0 percent) Spanish-speaking men. Howells, *A Century to Celebrate*, 37.

44. Howells, *A Century to Celebrate*, 36-38, 121. Mary I. Bunting to Nathan M. Pusey, Dinner Meeting of the Radcliffe Board of Trustees, Nov. 16, 1966, NMP Papers, file “Radcliffe 1966-1967.”



45. Under Linda Wilson, Radcliffe's seventh and last president (1989-1999), the college succeeded in raising \$85 million of a \$100 million capital campaign. Rosalind S. Helderman and Adam A. Sofen, "With Merger Sealed, Task Turns to Dean Search," Monday, Oct. 1, 1999; Joyce K. McIntyre, "Committee Creates Shortlist for Radcliffe Dean," Monday, Feb. 7, 2000; and McIntyre, "Dean Faces Myriad Challenges," Monday, April 3, 2000, all at *Harvard Crimson Online* at [www.thecrimson.com/news/article.asp?ref=6692](http://www.thecrimson.com/news/article.asp?ref=6692). Since the 1970s, affirmative action significantly increased the number of tenured women professors, from three in 1968-1969 to thirteen in October 1977 (about 3 percent) (Howells, *A Century to Celebrate*, 55, 57). Today, the number of tenured women had risen to almost 16 percent in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

46. Based on the 2,041 acceptance letters mailed in April 2001, "Women will comprise nearly 49 percent of the class, an unprecedented proportion" ("It's another record breaker: class of 2005 chosen from a record pool of 19,009," *Harvard University Gazette*, Thursday, April 5, 2001, at [www.news.harvard.edu/gazette/2001](http://www.news.harvard.edu/gazette/2001)). Even at 48.5 percent of the incoming freshman class, women still do not enjoy the same social opportunities as the men: they are not admitted to Harvard's final clubs, which the university considers to be "private." Nor will Harvard build them an all-women's center, a function once served by Radcliffe College, because doing so could be seen as discriminating against men. See *The Women's Guide to Harvard*, ed. Peggy Lim (Published by the Harvard-Radcliffe Women's Leadership Project, 2002).

47. Paul H. Buck to James B. Conant, Nov. 20, 1952, JBC Papers, file "Administrative V.P. to Annual Report."